

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

On page 11, third paragraph, please enter the following amendment:

By contrast, referring to **FIG. 2**, the present invention provides a central point of information **102**, accessible by all (subject to certain rules), without disturbing the existing market structure. There are still suppliers **104, 106** who compete for users **108, 110**. Product is still brought to the user's facilities **112, 114** by shippers **116, 118**. Suppliers **104, 106** still ~~manufacturer~~ manufacture products and hold it in their warehouse locations **122, 124** awaiting approval to distribute. Some suppliers **104, 106** may choose to place part of their supply at the hospital on consignment ~~**126**~~ (Not shown) which is enabled and easily managed through the present invention.

On page 11, fourth paragraph, please enter the following amendment:

Another element of the model is the proliferation of data access and/or viewing devices **142, 144, 146, 148, 150, 152** that enable all parties to see their data on their supply. These devices can be as varied as phones, pages, PDAs, computers, Internet browsers, etc. These devices communicate with the central independent repository **102** via communication links **162, 164, 166, 168, 170, 172, 174** – importantly, without need for a specific and proprietary communications protocol; rather, they rely on the standard communications protocol used to connect with this common communications platform (a preferred embodiment is the Internet). Another change to the market model is the addition of information collection devices (e.g., bar-code scanners) **128, 130, 132, 134, 136, 138, 140**, which are interfaced to a network which is in turn connected to the database via the Internet or other network (e.g., wireless). As indicated in **FIG. 2**, these devices **128, 130, 132, 134, 136, 138, 140** are widely deployed throughout the invention to collect data on a continuous basis.

On page 13, first paragraph, please enter the following amendment:

FIG. 3 illustrates the basic function of the present invention. A data collection device **128, 130, 132, 136, 138, 140** acquires information in the form of a code (an example is the alphanumeric code indicated by a barcode). The code is communicated via computer link **182** to a central Product Information Database **200**, which associates product attributes with the alphanumeric code. The Product Information Database **200** is updated by periodic communication via computer link **186** with a plurality of Vendor Product Attributes Databases **204**, maintained separate from the Product Information Database **200** by a plurality of vendors or suppliers. When the Product Information Database **200** can't identify a code, it communicates the problem to the Exception Capture and Reporting Engine **202** to be addressed and corrected via computer link **192**. The Product Information Database **200** continuously communicates via computer link **190** with a Central Inventory Data Repository **104**. The difference between the two databases is that the Product Information Database **200** is a record of single-instance product information regarding a plurality of products, and is not modified by exchanges with the Data Collection Device **128, 130, 132, 136, 138, 140**.

On page 14, third paragraph, please enter the following amendment:

In Block **520**, the node then receives a request for information. Preferably, this request may come ~~from~~ from at least one user (or, more specifically, would-be-user) of the product stored in the first database. For example, a buyer may inquire to the node as to the status of a particular product.

On page 31, first paragraph, please enter the following amendment:

4.1 Automated from Alerts section. The Low Stock Alert described in Section 2.3.2 allows the buyer to use a Communications Interface for Formatting and Viewing Data **142, 144, 146, 148, 150, 152**, along with functions contained in the Data Subset Presentation Engine **206**, to create orders for entry into other, unrelated systems or for direct transmission, via the Data Subset Presentation Engine **206**, to suppliers. In the preferred embodiment, the user selects “order” across from any line item indicated to be in short supply, then selects a “prepare order worksheet” button to retrieve a record from the Central Inventory Data Repository **104** via the Web browser, detailing the number of products to be ordered (the difference between the user’s par level and the current quantity, changeable by the user). Once completed, this order worksheet updates the Central Inventory Data Repository **104** to note that the product is on order. In the preferred embodiment, this status is altered either by the user’s adding of this product to his inventory record or by the Reconcile Order or Acknowledge Order function contained in the Data Subset Presentation Engine **206**.

On page 31, second paragraph, please enter the following amendment:

4.1 Manual. A manual order combines logic for searching the Product Information Database **200**, storing details in the Central Inventory Data Repository **104**, and communicating those details in the form of an order worksheet to any authorized participants in the system via a Communications Interface for Formatting and Viewing Data **142, 144, 146, 148, 150, 152**.

On page 32, second paragraph, please enter the following amendment:

4.4 Archive of order data. Order data is retained for later retrieval in the Central Inventory Data Repository **104**. The logic for finding and formatting stored order data is housed in the Data Subset Presentation Engine.

On page 37, fifth paragraph, please enter the following amendment:

- 1.1. Creating links for shared visibility. Certain logic in the Data Subset Presentation Engine 206 **206** relies on coded relationships between parties to determine access to information. One example in the present embodiment may be access by a user within one department of an organization to the data records regarding inventory or personnel of another department in the same organization. Another might be real-time access, via a Communications Interface for Formatting and Viewing Data **142, 144, 146, 148, 150, 152**, to buyer inventory data in the Central Inventory Data Repository **104** for the representative of a supplier to that buyer. A preferred embodiment of security for these restrictions is the access security described above in the **Security and Access Control** section, in addition to a system for encryption (Secure Socket Layer is an embodiment) of data traveling across a common communications system (e.g., the Internet).

On page 38, third paragraph, please enter the following amendment:

3. Resolve. In addition to simple "viewing" access, the preferred embodiment of this invention provides tools within the Data Subset Presentation Engine 206 **206** for the coordinator's representatives to resolve data issues and maintain and modify both the Central Inventory Data Repository **104** and the Product Information Database **200**. These issues ~~includes~~ include but are not limited to correcting erroneous product data, clearing passwords, altering database structure in the Product Information Database **200** or logical structure in the Data Subset Presentation Engine **206**, and modifying links between participants in the system, which are then stored in the Central Inventory Data Repository **104** to be referenced by logic residing in the Data Subset Presentation Engine **206**.